



BILLINGS GAZETTE

NaturEner to move wind turbines to protect birds

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GREAT FALLS — A San Francisco-based wind energy company building a 126-tower wind farm on private land in north-central Montana has agreed to move 25 of the towers farther away from raptor nests.

NaturEner USA LLC and Montana Audubon announced Thursday the towers at the \$400 million Rim Rock Wind Farm will be moved a half mile away from the Kevin Rim, identified as a key raptor area by the Bureau of Land Management. The Kevin Rim has been known to harbor up to 60 active nests of 10 raptor species in a given year, Montana Audubon said in a statement.

Montana Audubon said NaturEner agreed to make the changes after they had started construction on the wind farm about 20 miles northwest of Shelby.

"They listened to our recommendations and agreed to relocate 25 wind turbines in the Rim Rock wind project," said Montana Audubon Executive Director Steve Hoffman. "These changes occurred late in the process, after construction had begun, and at great expense to NaturEner."

NaturEner and Montana Audubon also signed a memorandum of understanding stating the two groups will continue to work together on the project to mitigate the effects on birds and bats.

The 189 megawatt wind farm will be connected to the Montana-Alberta tie line and is expected to begin producing energy by the end of the year, company officials said.

NaturEner also owns and operates the 210-megawatt Glacier Wind 1 & 2 projects located near Ethridge.